

IN THE CLAIMS:

72. (previously added) A method of dispensing reagents onto a slide, the method comprising the steps of:

providing at least one reagent container;

providing at least one slide on a slide support;

automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer, the step of automatically identifying being based on information associated with the reagent container;

automatically determining whether reagent in the reagent container should be dispensed onto the slide; and

dispensing the reagent in the reagent container onto the slide based on the determination of whether the reagent in the reagent container should be dispensed onto the slide.

73. (previously added) The method of claim 72, wherein the step of automatically determining whether reagent in the reagent container should be dispensed onto the slide includes identifying information from the slide.

74. (previously added) The method of claim 73, further comprising the steps of:

determining a position of the slide; and

correlating the position of the slide with the information identifying the slide.

75. (previously added) The method of claim 73, wherein the information identified from the slide includes a slide barcode.

76. (previously added) The method of claim 75, wherein the step of identifying information from the slide includes reading the slide barcode.

77. (previously added) The method of claim 76, further comprising the steps of:
determining a position of the slide; and
correlating the position of the slide with the slide barcode.

78. (currently amended) The method of claim 77, wherein the step of determining a position of the slide includes determining a position of the slide relative to a slide carousel home position.

79. (previously added) The method of claim 72, wherein the information associated with the reagent container includes a reagent barcode.

80. (previously added) The method of claim 79, wherein the reagent barcode is placed on the reagent container.

81. (currently amended) The method of claim 72, wherein the step of automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer includes the steps of:
providing a bar code reader;
reading a reagent bar code placed onassociated with the reagent container using the bar code reader thereby acquiring reagent information; and
sending the reagent information to the computer.

82. (previously added) The method of claim 81, further comprising the steps of:
determining position information for the reagent container; and
sending the position information to the computer.

83. (previously added) The method of claim 82, wherein a reagent carousel supports the reagent container and wherein the step of determining position information for the reagent container includes homing the reagent carousel and determining an indexed position of a motor drive for the reagent container.

84. (previously added) The method of claim 81, wherein the reagent bar code identifies the reagent in the reagent container.

85. (previously added) The method of claim 84, wherein the step of automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer is performed at a beginning of a slide treatment operation.

86. (previously added) The method of claim 85, wherein the step of automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer further includes correlating a position of the reagent container with the reagent carousel.

87. (previously added) The method of claim 81, wherein the reagent container is in a reagent carousel and wherein the step of automatically identifying reagent further includes the

step of rotating the reagent carousel so that the reagent bar code on the reagent container is read by the bar code reader.

88. (previously added) The method of claim 72, further comprising the step of moving the reagent container and the slide support relative to one another to position the reagent container over the slide.

89. (previously added) The method of claim 88, wherein a reagent carousel supports the reagent container and wherein the step of moving the reagent container and the slide support relative to one another includes moving a drive plate which supports the reagent carousel to place the reagent container in a reagent delivery zone.

90. (currently amended) The method of claim 72, wherein the step of dispensing the reagent in the reagent container onto the slide includes the step of pressuring mechanically actuating the reagent container thereby metering a volume of reagent onto the slide.

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91. (currently amended) The method of claim 90, wherein the step of pressuring the reagent container includes activating an air cylinder to move downward actuator to move into positive contact with the reagent container.

92. (previously added) A method of dispensing reagents onto a slide, the method comprising the steps of:

providing at least one reagent container;

providing at least one slide on a slide support;

automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer, the step of automatically identifying being based on information associated with the reagent container;

automatically determining whether the reagent in the reagent container should be dispensed onto the slide;

moving the reagent container and the slide support relative to one another to position the reagent container over the slide; and

dispensing the reagent in the reagent container onto the slide based on the determination of whether the reagent in the reagent container should be dispensed onto the slide.

93. (previously added) The method of claim 92, wherein the information associated with the reagent container includes a reagent barcode.

94. (previously added) The method of claim 93, wherein the reagent barcode is placed on the reagent container.

95. (previously added) The method of claim 92, wherein the step of automatically identifying the reagent container using a computer includes the steps of:

providing a bar code reader;

reading a reagent bar code placed on the reagent container using the bar code reader; and

sending information from the reading of the reagent bar code to the computer.

96. (previously added) The method of claim 95, wherein the reagent container is supported on a reagent carousel and wherein the step of moving the reagent container and the slide support relative to one another includes moving a drive plate which supports the reagent carousel to place the reagent container in a reagent delivery zone.

97. (currently amended) The method of claim 92, wherein the step of dispensing the reagent in the reagent container onto the slide includes the steps of:

pushing downward on the reagent container; and thereby
applying a metered volume of reagent onto the slide.

98. (currently amended) The method of claim 97, wherein the step of pushing downward on the reagent container includes activating ~~an air cylinder to move downward in order to push actuator to move into positive contact with~~ the reagent container.
